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APPLICATION FOR LETTERS PATENT

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SEMICONDUCTOR PROCESSORS, SENSORS,
SEMICONDUCTOR PROCESSING SYSTEMS,
SEMICONDUCTOR WORKPIECE PROCESSING
METHODS, AND TURBIDITY MONITORING
METHODS

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INVENTORS

SCOTT E. MOORE
SCOTT G. MEIKLE
MAGDEL CRUM

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1 SEMICONDUCTOR PROCESSORS, SENSORS, SEMICONDUCTOR
2 PROCESSING SYSTEMS, SEMICONDUCTOR WORKPIECE
3 PROCESSING METHODS, AND TURBIDITY MONITORING
4 METHODS

5 **TECHNICAL FIELD**

6 The present invention relates to semiconductor processors, sensors,
7 semiconductor processing systems, semiconductor workpiece processing
8 methods, and turbidity monitoring methods.

9 **BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

10 Numerous semiconductor processing tools are typically utilized
11 during the fabrication of semiconductor devices. One such common
12 semiconductor processor is a chemical-mechanical polishing (CMP)
13 processor. A chemical-mechanical polishing processor is typically used
14 to polish or planarize the front face or device side of a semiconductor
15 wafer. Numerous polishing steps utilizing the chemical-mechanical
16 polishing system can be implemented during the fabrication or processing
17 of a single wafer.

18 In an exemplary chemical-mechanical polishing apparatus, a
19 semiconductor wafer is rotated against a rotating polishing pad while an
20 abrasive and chemically reactive solution, also referred to as a slurry,
21 is supplied to the rotating pad. Further details of chemical-mechanical
22 polishing are described in U.S. Patent No. 5,755,614, incorporated herein
23 by reference.
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1 A number of polishing parameters affect the processing of a
2 semiconductor wafer. Exemplary polishing parameters of a
3 semiconductor wafer include downward pressure upon a semiconductor
4 wafer, rotational speed of a carrier, speed of a polishing pad, flow rate
5 of slurry, and pH of the slurry.

6 Slurries used for chemical-mechanical polishing may be divided into
7 three categories including silicon polish slurries, oxide polish slurries and
8 metals polish slurries. A silicon polish slurry is designed to polish and
9 planarize bare silicon wafers. The silicon polish slurry can include a
10 proportion of particles in a slurry typically with a range from 1-15
11 percent by weight.

12 An oxide polish slurry may be utilized for polishing and
13 planarization of a dielectric layer formed upon a semiconductor wafer.
14 Oxide polish slurries typically have a proportion of particles in the
15 slurry within a range of 1-15 percent by weight. Conductive layers
16 upon a semiconductor wafer may be polished and planarized using
17 chemical-mechanical polishing and a metals polish slurry. A proportion
18 of particles in a metals polish slurry may be within a range of 1-5
19 percent by weight.

20 It has been observed that slurries can undergo chemical changes
21 during polishing processes. Such changes can include composition
22 and pH, for example. Furthermore, polishing can produce stray
23 particles from the semiconductor wafer, pad material or elsewhere.
24 Polishing may be adversely affected once these by-products reach a

1 sufficient concentration. Thereafter, the slurry is typically removed from
2 the chemical-mechanical polishing processing tool.

3 It is important to know the status of a slurry being utilized to
4 process semiconductor wafers inasmuch as the performance of a
5 semiconductor processor is greatly impacted by the slurry. Such
6 information can indicate proper times for flushing or draining the
7 currently used slurry.

8 9 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

10 The present invention provides semiconductor processors, sensors,
11 semiconductor processing systems, semiconductor workpiece processing
12 methods, and turbidity monitoring methods.

13 According to one aspect of the invention, a semiconductor
14 processor is provided. The semiconductor processor includes a process
15 chamber and a supply connection configured to provide slurry to the
16 process chamber. A sensor is provided to monitor turbidity of the
17 slurry. One embodiment of the sensor is configured to emit
18 electromagnetic energy towards the supply connection providing the
19 slurry. The supply connection is one of transparent and translucent in
20 one embodiment. The sensor includes a receiver in the described
21 embodiment configured to receive at least some of the emitted
22 electromagnetic energy and to generate a signal indicative of turbidity
23 responsive to the received electromagnetic energy.

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1 In another arrangement, plural sensors are provided to monitor
2 the turbidity of a subject material, such as slurry, at different
3 corresponding positions. In addition, one or more sensors can be
4 provided to monitor turbidity of a subject material within a horizontally
5 oriented supply connection or container, a vertically oriented supply
6 connection or container, or supply connections or containers in other
7 orientations.

8 One sensor configuration of the invention provides a source
9 configured to emit electromagnetic energy towards the supply connection.
10 The sensor additionally includes plural receivers. One receiver is
11 positioned to receive electromagnetic energy passing through the subject
12 material and configured to output a feedback signal indicative of the
13 received electromagnetic energy. The source is configured to adjust the
14 intensity of emitted electromagnetic energy to provide a substantially
15 constant amount of electromagnetic energy at the receiver. Another
16 receiver is provided to monitor the emission of electromagnetic energy
17 from the source and provide a signal indicative of turbidity.

18 The invention also includes other aspects including methodical
19 aspects and other structural aspects as described below.

20 21 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

22 Preferred embodiments of the invention are described below with
23 reference to the following accompanying drawings.
24

1 Fig. 1 is an illustrative representation of a slurry distributor and
2 semiconductor processor.

3 Fig. 2 is an illustrative representation of an exemplary
4 arrangement for monitoring a static slurry.

5 Fig. 3 is an illustrative representation of an exemplary
6 arrangement for monitoring a dynamic slurry.

7 Fig. 4 is an isometric view of one configuration of a turbidity
8 sensor.

9 Fig. 5 is a cross-sectional view of another sensor configuration.

10 Fig. 6 is an illustrative representation of an exemplary
11 arrangement of a source and receiver of a sensor.

12 Fig. 7 is a functional block diagram illustrating components of an
13 exemplary sensor and associated circuitry.

14 Fig. 8 is a schematic diagram of an exemplary sensor
15 configuration.

16 Fig. 9 is a schematic diagram illustrating circuitry of the sensor
17 configuration shown in Fig. 6.

18 Fig. 10 is a schematic diagram of another exemplary sensor
19 configuration.

20 Fig. 11 is an illustrative representation of a sensor implemented
21 in a centrifuge application.

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DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

This disclosure of the invention is submitted in furtherance of the constitutional purposes of the U.S. Patent Laws "to promote the progress of science and useful arts" (Article 1, Section 8).

Referring to Fig. 1, a semiconductor processing system 10 is illustrated. The depicted semiconductor processing system 10 includes a semiconductor processor 12 coupled with a distributor 14. Semiconductor processor 12 includes a process chamber 16 configured to receive a semiconductor workpiece, such as a silicon wafer. In an exemplary configuration, semiconductor processor 12 is implemented as a chemical-mechanical polishing processing tool.

Distributor 14 is configured to supply a subject material for use in semiconductor workpiece processing operations. For example, distributor 14 can supply a subject material comprising a slurry to semiconductor processor 12 for chemical-mechanical polishing applications.

Exemplary conduits or piping of semiconductor processing system 10 are shown in Fig. 1. In the depicted configuration, a static route 18 and a dynamic route 20 are provided. Further details of static route 18 and dynamic route 20 are described below with reference to Figs. 2 and 3, respectively. In general, static route 18 is utilized to provide monitoring of the subject material of distributor 14 in a substantially static state. Such provides real-time information regarding the subject material being utilized within semiconductor processing system 10. Dynamic route 20 comprises a recirculation and distribution

1 line in one configuration. In addition, subject material can be supplied
2 to semiconductor processor 12 via dynamic route 20.

3 Distributor 14 can include an internal recirculation pump (not
4 shown) to periodically recirculate subject material through dynamic
5 route 20. Subject material having particulate matter, such as a slurry,
6 experiences gravity separation over time. Separation of such particulate
7 matter of the slurry is undesirable. For example, the particulate matter
8 may settle in areas of piping, valves or other areas of a supply line
9 which are difficult to reach and clean. Further, some particulate matter
10 may be extremely difficult to resuspend once it has settled over a
11 sufficient period of time. Accordingly, it is desirable to monitor
12 turbidity (percent solids within a liquid) of the subject material to
13 enable reduction or minimization of excessive settling.

14 Referring to Fig. 2, details of an exemplary static route 18
15 coupled with distributor 14 are illustrated. Static route 18 includes an
16 elongated tube or pipe 19 for receiving subject material from
17 distributor 14. In a preferred embodiment, pipe 19 comprises a
18 transparent or translucent material, such as a transparent or translucent
19 plastic. Static route 18 is coupled with distributor 14 at an intake
20 end 22 of pipe 19. Piping hardware provided within the depicted static
21 route 18 includes an intake valve 24, sensors 26 and an exhaust
22 valve 28. Exhaust valve 28 is adjacent an exhaust end 30 of static
23 route 18.
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Valves 24, 28 can be selectively controlled to provide monitoring of the subject material of distributor 14 in a substantially static state. For example, with exhaust valve 28 in a closed state, intake valve 24 may be selectively opened to permit the entry of subject material within an intermediate container 32. Container 32 can be defined as the portion of static route 18 intermediate intake valve 24 and exhaust valve 28 in the described configuration. In typical operations, intake valve 24 is sealed or closed following entry of subject material into container 32. In the depicted arrangement, static route 18 is provided in a substantially vertical orientation. Static route 18 using valves 24, 28 and container 32 is configured to provide received subject material in a substantially static state (e.g., the subject material is not in a flowing state).

Plural sensors 26 are provided at predefined positions relative to container 32 as shown. Sensors 26 are configured to monitor the opaqueness or turbidity of subject material received within static route 18. In one configuration, plural sensors 26 are provided at different vertical positions to provide monitoring of the turbidity of the subject material within container 32 at corresponding different desired vertical positions of container 32. Such can be utilized to provide differential information between the sensors 26 to indicate small changes in slurry settling.

As described in further detail below, individual sensors include a source 40 and a receiver 42. In one configuration, source 40 is

1 Subject material within container 32 may be drained via exhaust
2 valve 28 following monitoring of the subject material. Exhaust end 30
3 of static route 18 can be coupled with a recovery system for direction
4 back to distributor 14, or to a drain if the subject material will not be
5 reused.

6 Referring to Fig. 3, details of dynamic route 20 are described.
7 Dynamic route 20 comprises a recirculation pipe 50 coupled with a
8 supply connection 52. Recirculation pipe 50 and supply connection 52
9 preferably comprise transparent or translucent tubing or piping, such as
10 transparent or translucent plastic pipe.

11 Recirculation pipe 50 includes an intake end 54 and a discharge
12 end 56. Subject material or slurry can be pumped into recirculation
13 pipe 50 via intake end 54. An intake valve 58 and an exhaust or
14 discharge valve 60 are coupled with recirculation pipe 50 for controlling
15 the flow of subject material. Plural sensors 26 are provided within
16 sections of recirculation pipe 50 as shown. One of sensors 26 is
17 vertically arranged with respect to a vertical pipe section 62. Another
18 of sensors 26 is horizontally oriented with respect to a horizontal pipe
19 section 64. Sensors 26 are configured to monitor the turbidity of
20 subject material or slurry within vertical pipe section 62 and horizontal
21 pipe section 64.

22 Individual sensors 26 configured to monitor horizontal pipe sections
23 (e.g., pipe section 64) may be arranged to monitor a lower portion of
24 the horizontal pipe for gravity settling of particulate matter. As

1 described below, an optical axis of sensor 26 can be aimed to intersect
2 a lower portion of horizontally arranged tubing or piping to provide the
3 preferred monitoring. Such can assist with detection of precipitation of
4 particulate matter which can form into large undesirable particles leading
5 to defects. Accordingly, once a turbidity limit has been reached, the
6 tubing or piping may be flushed.

7 Supply connection 52 is in fluid communication with horizontal
8 pipe section 64. In addition, supply connection 52 is in fluid
9 communication with process chamber 16 of semiconductor processor 12
10 shown in Fig. 1. Supply connection 52 is configured to supply subject
11 material such as slurry to process chamber 16. A sensor 26 is
12 provided adjacent supply connection 52. Sensor 26 is configured to
13 monitor the turbidity of subject material within supply connection 52.
14 Additionally, a supply valve 66 controls the flow of subject material
15 within supply connection 52.

16 Although only one supply connection 52 is illustrated, it is
17 understood that additional supply connections can be provided to couple
18 associated semiconductor processors (not shown) with recirculation
19 pipe 50 and distributor 14. The depicted supply connection 52 is
20 arranged in a vertical orientation. Supply connection 52 with associated
21 sensor 26 may also be provided in a horizontal or other orientation in
22 other configurations.

23 Referring to Fig. 4, an exemplary configuration of sensor 26 is
24 shown. The illustrated configuration of sensor 26 includes a housing 70,

cover 72 and associated circuit board 74. The illustrated housing 70 is configured to couple with a conduit, such as supply connection 52. For example, housing 70 is arranged to receive supply connection 52 with a longitudinal orifice 76. Cover 72 is provided to substantially enclose supply connection 52. In a preferred arrangement, housing 70 and cover 72 are formed of a substantially opaque material.

Housing 70 is configured to provide source 40 and receiver 42 adjacent supply connection 52. More specifically, housing 70 is configured to align source 40 and receiver 42 with respect to supply connection 52 and any subject material such as slurry therein. In the depicted configuration, housing 70 aligns source 40 and receiver 42 to define an optical axis 45 which passes through supply connection 52.

The illustrated housing 70 is configured to allow attachment of sensor 26 to supply connection 52 or detachment of sensor 26 from supply connection 52 without disruption of the flow of subject material within supply connection 52. Housing 70 can be clipped onto supply connection 52 as illustrated or removed therefrom without disrupting the flow of subject material within supply connection 52 in the described embodiment.

Source 40 and receiver 42 may be coupled with circuit board 74 via internal connections (not shown). Further details regarding circuitry implemented within circuit board 74 are described below. The depicted sensor configuration provides sensor 26 capable of monitoring the turbidity of subject material within supply connection 52 without

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1 contacting and possibly contaminating the subject material or without
2 disrupting the flow of subject material within supply connection 52.

3 More specifically, sensor 26 is substantially insulated from the
4 subject material within supply connection 52 in the described
5 arrangement. Accordingly, sensor 26 provides a non-intrusive device for
6 monitoring the turbidity of subject material 80. Such is preferred in
7 applications wherein contamination of subject material 80 is a concern.
8 Utilization of sensor 26 does not impede or otherwise affect flow of the
9 subject material.

10 In one configuration, source 40 comprises a light emitting
11 diode (LED) configured to emit infrared electromagnetic energy.
12 Source 40 is configured to emit electromagnetic energy of another
13 wavelength in an alternative embodiment. Receiver 42 may be
14 implemented as a photodiode in an exemplary embodiment.
15 Receiver 42 is configured to receive electromagnetic energy emitted from
16 source 40. Receiver 42 of sensor 26 is configured to generate a signal
17 indicative of the turbidity of the subject material and output the signal
18 to associated circuitry for processing or data logging.

19 Referring to Fig. 5, source 40 and receiver 42 are coupled with
20 electrical circuitry 78. In the illustrated embodiment, source 40 and
21 receiver 42 are aimed towards one another. Source 40 is operable to
22 emit electromagnetic energy 79 towards subject material 80. Particulate
23 matter within subject material 80 operates to absorb some of the
24 emitted electromagnetic energy 79. Accordingly, only a portion,

1 indicated by reference 82, of the emitted electromagnetic energy 79
2 passes through subject material 80 and is received within receiver 42.

3 Electrical circuitry 78 is configured to control the emission of
4 electromagnetic energy 79 from source 40 in the described configuration.
5 Receiver 42 is configured to output a signal indicative of the received
6 electromagnetic energy 82 corresponding to the intensity of the received
- electromagnetic energy. Electrical circuitry 78 receives the outputted
8 signal and, in one embodiment, conditions the signal for application to
9 an associated computer 84. In one embodiment, computer 84 is
10 configured to compile a log of received information from receiver 42
11 of sensor 26.

12 Referring to Fig. 6, an alternative sensor arrangement indicated
13 by reference 26a is shown. In the depicted embodiment, an alternative
14 housing 70a is implemented as a cross fitting 44 utilized to align the
15 source and receiver of sensor 26a with supply connection 52. Supply
16 connection 52 is aligned along one axis of cross fitting 44.

17 In the depicted configuration, light-carrying cable or light pipe,
18 such as fiberoptic cable, is utilized to couple a remotely located source
19 and receiver with supply connection 52. A first fiberoptic cable 46
20 provides electromagnetic energy emitted from source 42 to supply
21 connection 52. A lens 47 is provided flush against supply
22 connection 52 and is configured to emit the electromagnetic light energy
23 from cable 46 towards supply connection 52 along optical axis 45
24 perpendicular to the axis of supply connection 52. Electromagnetic

energy which is not absorbed by subject material 80 is received within a lens 49 coupled with a second fiberoptic cable 48. Fiberoptic cable 48 transfers the received light energy to receiver 42. Sensor arrangement 26a can include appropriate seals, bushings, etc., although such is not shown in Fig. 6.

As previously mentioned, supply connection 52 is preferably transparent to pass as much electromagnetic light energy as possible. Supply connection 52 is translucent in an alternative arrangement. Lenses 47, 49 are preferably associated with supply connection 52 to provide maximum transfer of electromagnetic energy. In other embodiments, lenses 47, 49 are omitted. Further alternatively, the source and receiver of sensor 26 may be positioned within housing 70a in place of lenses 47, 49. Fiberoptic cables 46, 48 could be removed in such an embodiment.

Referring to Fig. 7, another implementation of sensor 26 is shown. Source 40 and receiver 42 are arranged at a substantially 90° angle in the depicted configuration. Source 40 operates to emit electromagnetic energy 79 into supply connection 52 and subject material 80 within supply connection 52. As previously stated, subject material 80 can contain particulate matter which may operate to reflect light. Receiver 42 is positioned in the depicted arrangement to receive such reflected light 82a. Associated electrical circuitry coupled with source 40 and receiver 42 can be calibrated to provide accurate turbidity information responsive to the reception of reflected light 82a.

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1 Although source 40 and receiver 42 are illustrated at a 90° angle in
2 the depicted arrangement, source 40 and receiver 42 may be arranged
3 at any other angular relationship with respect to one another and
4 supply connection 52 to provide emission of electromagnetic energy 79
5 and reception of reflected electromagnetic energy 82a.

6 Referring to Fig. 8, one arrangement of sensor 26 for providing
7 turbidity information of subject material 80 is shown. Source 40 is
8 implemented as a light emitting diode (LED) configured to emit infrared
9 electromagnetic energy 79 towards supply connection 52 having subject
10 material 80 in the depicted arrangement. A positive voltage bias may
11 be applied to a voltage regulator 86 configured to output a constant
12 supply voltage. For example, the positive voltage bias can be a 12
13 Volt DC voltage bias and voltage regulator 86 can be configured to
14 provide a 5 Volt DC reference voltage to light emitting diode
15 source 40.

16 Source 40 emits electromagnetic energy of a known intensity
17 responsive to an applied current from dropping resistor 87.
18 Receiver 42 comprises a photodiode in an exemplary embodiment
19 configured to receive light electromagnetic energy 82 not absorbed within
20 subject material 80. Photodiode receiver 42 is coupled with an
21 amplifier 88 in the depicted configuration. Amplifier 88 is configured
22 to provide an amplified output signal indicating the turbidity of subject
23 material 80. Other configurations of source 40 and receiver 42 are
24 possible.

1 Referring to Fig. 9, additional details of the arrangement shown
2 in Fig. 8 are illustrated. Source 40 is implemented as a light emitting
3 diode (LED). Receiver 42 comprises a photodiode. A
4 potentiometer 90 is coupled with a pin 1 and a pin 8 of amplifier 88
5 and can be varied to provide adjustment of the gain of amplifier 88.
6 An exemplary variable base resistance of potentiometer 90 is 100 Ω k.

7 Another potentiometer 92 is coupled with a pin 5 of amplifier 88
8 and is configured to provide calibration of sensor 26. Potentiometer 92
9 may be varied to provide an offset of the output reference of
10 amplifier 88. An exemplary variable base resistance of potentiometer 92
11 is 500 Ω .

12 A positive voltage reference bias is applied to a diode 94. An
13 exemplary positive voltage is approximately 12-24 Volts DC. Voltage
14 regulator 86 receives the input voltage and provides a reference voltage
15 of 5 Volts DC in the described embodiment.

16 Referring to Fig. 10, an alternative sensor configuration is
17 illustrated as reference 26b. The illustrated sensor configuration includes
18 a driver 95 coupled with source 40. Additionally, a beam splitter 96
19 is provided intermediate source 40 and supply connection 52. Further,
20 an additional receiver 43 and associated amplifier 97 are provided as
21 illustrated.

22 A reference voltage is applied to driver 95 during operation.
23 Source 40 is operable to emit electromagnetic energy 79 towards beam
24 splitter 96. Beam splitter 96 directs received electromagnetic energy

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1 into a beam 91 towards supply connection 52 and a beam 93 towards
2 receiver 43. Receiver 42 is positioned to receive non-absorbed
3 electromagnetic energy 91 passing through supply connection 52 and
4 subject material 80. Receiver 42 is configured to generate and output
5 a feedback signal to driver 95. The feedback signal is indicative of the
6 electromagnetic energy 91 received within receiver 42.

7 The depicted sensor 26b is configured to provide a substantially
8 constant amount of light electromagnetic energy to receiver 42.
9 Driver 95 is configured to control the amount or intensity of emitted
10 electromagnetic energy from source 40. More specifically, driver 95 is
11 configured in the described embodiment to increase or decrease the
12 amount of electromagnetic energy 79 emitted from source 40 responsive
13 to the feedback signal from receiver 42.

14 Receiver 43 is positioned to receive the emitted electromagnetic
15 energy directed from beam splitter 96 along beam 93. Receiver 43
16 receives electromagnetic energy not passing through subject material 80
17 in the depicted embodiment. The output of receiver 43 is applied to
18 amplifier 97 which provides a signal indicative of the turbidity of subject
19 material 80 within supply connection 52 responsive to the intensity of
20 electromagnetic energy of beam 93.

21 Referring to Fig. 11, an exemplary alternative configuration for
22 analyzing slurry in a substantially static state is shown. The illustrated
23 static route 18a comprises a centrifuge 100. The depicted
24 centrifuge 100 includes a container 102 configured to receive subject

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material 80. Plural sensors 26 are provided at predefined positions along container 102 to monitor the turbidity of subject material 80 at different radial positions. Centrifuge 100 including container 102 is configured to rapidly rotate in the direction indicated by arrows 104 about axis 101 to assist with precipitation of particulate matter within subject material 80. Such provides increased setting rates of the particulate matter. Sensors 26 can individually provide turbidity information of subject material 80 at the predefined positions of sensors 26 relative to container 102. Such information can indicate the state or condition of the slurry as previously discussed. Centrifuge 100 can be configured to receive samples of slurry or other subject material during operation of semiconductor workpiece system 10. Information from sensors 26 can be accessed via rotary couplings or wireless configurations during rotation of container 102 in exemplary embodiments.

From the foregoing, it is apparent the present invention provides a sensor which can be utilized to monitor turbidity of a nearly opaque fluid. Further, the disclosed sensor configurations have a wide dynamic range, are nonintrusive and have no wetted parts. In addition, the sensors of the present invention are cost effective when compared with other devices, such as densitometers.

In compliance with the statute, the invention has been described in language more or less specific as to structural and methodical features. It is to be understood, however, that the invention is not

1 limited to the specific features shown and described, since the means
2 herein disclosed comprise preferred forms of putting the invention into
3 effect. The invention is, therefore, claimed in any of its forms or
4 modifications within the proper scope of the appended claims
5 appropriately interpreted in accordance with the doctrine of equivalents.
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